

AperTO - Archivio Istituzionale Open Access dell'Università di Torino

## Nazi biopolitics and the dark geographies of the selva.

### This is the author's manuscript

*Original Citation:*

*Availability:*

This version is available <http://hdl.handle.net/2318/101008> since

*Terms of use:*

Open Access

Anyone can freely access the full text of works made available as "Open Access". Works made available under a Creative Commons license can be used according to the terms and conditions of said license. Use of all other works requires consent of the right holder (author or publisher) if not exempted from copyright protection by the applicable law.

(Article begins on next page)



# UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI TORINO

***This is an author version of the contribution published on:***

*Questa è la versione dell'autore dell'opera:*

*Journal of Genocide Research, Volume 13, Issue 1-2, 2011,*

***The definitive version is available at:***

*La versione definitiva è disponibile alla URL:*

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14623528.2011.559114#.U7HgW41tkY>

## **Nazi biopolitics and the dark geographies of the *selva***

Paolo Giaccaria

Dipartimento Interateneo Territorio

University of Turin

Viale Mattioli 39

10125 Turin, Italy

[paolo.giaccaria@polito.it](mailto:paolo.giaccaria@polito.it)

+39 348 3161218

Claudio Minca

Socio-Spatial Analysis Chair Group

Wageningen University

Gaia Building

ESP Po Box 47, 6700 AA Wageningen, The Netherlands

[claudio.minca@wur.nl](mailto:claudio.minca@wur.nl)

+31 620 958987

**Also**

Department of Geography

Royal Holloway, University of London

Egham, Surrey, TW20 0EX

United Kingdom

**Paolo Giaccaria** is assistant professor in Political and Economic Geography at the University of Turin. After completing his PhD at the London School of Economics with a dissertation on the use – and misuse – of biological metaphors in geographical discourses, his recent work has focused on two main issues, the geographies of the Mediterranean and the biopolitical spatiality of the Holocaust.

**Claudio Minca** is currently Professor and Head of the Socio-Spatial Analysis chair group at Wageningen University and Professor of Geography at Royal Holloway, University of London. He has written widely on geographical theory, tourism and travel, and biopolitics. His most recent books are *Travels in Paradox* (2006, with Tim Oakes), *Social Capital and Urban Networks of Trust* (2009, with Jouni Hakli) and *Real Tourism* (forthcoming, with Tim Oakes).

## **Abstract**

This article examines the spatialities of Nazi genocidal practices. It does so by engaging with the concepts of *selva* and *città*, as inspired by Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben and drawing upon a broader tradition in human geography. Although the historical events that we recall have been extensively discussed elsewhere, we revisit them here through the lens of two geographical metaphors, the *selva* and the *città*, in order to gain new insight into the spatial and philosophical dimensions of Nazi geopolitics and biopolitics. We also comment on how these latter have contributed to the merging of the ‘ideal’ and the ‘factual’ realms of the Nazi geopolitical project for the creation of new vital space for the German people. We suggest that much can be learned from an examination of the ways in which particular understandings of (imagined and material) space marked the genocidal plans and practices of the Nazi perpetrators, producing a specific geography of Genocide, where (spatial) theory and the implementation of extermination came together.

## ***Selva and Città***

This article intends to contribute to the study of Nazi genocidal practices from a geographical perspective. In particular, it engages with the geographical metaphors of *selva* and *città*, as presented by Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, in order to further investigate the spatialities of the extermination practices perpetuated by the Nazis. Giorgio Agamben is today one of the most influential living critical theorists among scholars in the humanities and the social sciences. However, his contribution to the discussion of the Holocaust, of the concentration camps, of witnessing, to name a few, has been highly controversial. Dominick LaCapra, for one, while recognizing the wide impact of Agamben's philosophical speculations, argues that his take on history is 'voided of specificity and counts at best as an instantiation of transhistorical theoretical concerns and post-apocalyptic apprehensions'.<sup>i</sup> For LaCapra, who dedicates a key part of his influential *History in Transit* to the work of the Italian philosopher, the main problem is that Agamben's approach to Auschwitz fails to explore 'the problematic, mutually questioning relation between history and theory', and ends up seeing 'the historically specific, such as Auschwitz, simply as an instantiation, illustration, sign'.<sup>ii</sup> Agamben's reference to Nazi biopolitics has been also criticised for the way in which he analyses the logic of the camp. Samuel Moyn, in a recent intervention,<sup>iii</sup> has expressed concern for what he describes as a lack of (theoretical and historical) distinction between extermination camps and concentration camps in Agamben's description of the transformation of the inmates into 'homines sacri'. At the same time, as rightly argued by Mazower, Agamben's project is 'not interested in historical change but in what he sees as the deeper meaning, the potentiality, that interpretation may glean from certain historical occurrences. His main concern is to find clues that will allow us to move toward redemption, to chart that course to a new politics, a way out of a fallen world.'<sup>iv</sup>

It is with this last interpretation in mind that we suggest to move beyond Agamben's particular engagement with the camp and questions of history, and to investigate instead how other elements of his philosophical endeavour can be of use for a reconsideration of genocide from an eminently spatial and geographical perspective. It is by now widely acknowledged that what Mazower<sup>v</sup> describes as 'Agamben's complex and sometimes obscure chain of thought' is largely based on his distinction between what he

famously defines as 'bare life' (*nuda vita*) and political life in the realm of biopolitics, and to the ways in which this very biopolitics is linked to a re-interpretation of Carl Schmitt's definition of the state of exception.<sup>vi</sup> What we will try to do here, instead, is to engage with two other, equally important, elements of Agamben's conceptual apparatus (often directly or indirectly linked to questions of space and spatial theory),<sup>vii</sup> drawing upon a well-consolidated methodological approach in human and political geography.<sup>viii</sup> The historical events here recalled are well known and have been thoroughly discussed elsewhere in great detail. However, the purpose of revisiting them through the lens provided by the Agambenian concepts of *selva* and *città*, intended as geographical metaphors, is to gain new insight on the spatial and philosophical dimensions of Nazi geopolitics and biopolitics. Specifically, ours is an attempt to highlight how powerful spatial metaphors have contributed to the merging of the ideal and the factual realms of the Nazi geopolitical project; that is, how the anthropogenesis at the basis of Nazi biopolitical ideology was translated into a set of spatial imaginations and spatial practices. Our paper moves from the conviction that there is lot to learn from the ways in which thought and (imagined and material) space transversed the genocidal plans and practices of the Nazi perpetrators, by producing a specific geography of Genocide, where (spatial) theory and the implementation of extermination came together.

In the original version of *Homo Sacer*, Giorgio Agamben presents the concepts of *selva* and *città* as the pillars of his theory of the sovereign ban.<sup>ix</sup> *Selva* is used here in the dual sense of original 'state of nature' and of actual forest; the Italian term '*selva*' here implicitly recalls Servius' distinction between *lucus*, *nemus* and *silva*: '*Lucus est arborum multitudo cum religione, nemus composita multitudo arborum, silva diffusa et inculta.*'<sup>x</sup> *Città*, instead, is intended here, as for Agamben, as the locus of both the *civitas* and of the *urbs*.<sup>xi</sup> The *città* is not *only* the *urbs*, the city in literal terms. For Agamben (who, in that specific passage written in Italian, deliberately refers to the *città* in these broader terms), it is rather a principle of *communitas* and civilization. In this sense, the rural planning policies of the Nazis or even the wide-reaching plans for the re-forestation of the occupied territories must be considered part of the production of the '*città*', of the spatialised attempt to build a racially purified *communitas*. The *selva*, then, is not *just* the

forest, the woods: it is the spatialised principle of untamed nature against which the principle of a new German *communitas* must be imagined and, again, spatialised.

The *uomo-lupo*, the werewolf, is the figure that Agamben adopts to explain the *soglia* ('threshold' in Italian) between this reading of *selva* and *città*: 'a threshold of indistinction and of passage between animal and man, *physis* and *nomos*, exclusion and inclusion.'<sup>xii</sup> The state of nature that the werewolf embodies is thus not an epoch that precedes the foundation of the *città*, but a principle internal to the *città* itself. Hence, Agamben's werewolf is a subject located between *selva* and *città*, excluded by but also constitutive of both. If *selva* and *città* are separated and defined by a true spatial threshold, then this space of indistinction is located in/on the body of the *bandit*, of the werewolf 'who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither.'<sup>xiii</sup> It is here that Agamben situates the 'survival of the state of nature at the very heart of the State',<sup>xiv</sup> but also where the threshold between bare life and a-life-worth-living becomes visible.

This article intends to engage with these two spatial concepts in order to investigate how the broader geographies of the Holocaust and Nazi spatial racialized thinking were linked to the biopolitical project of crafting a German New Man.<sup>xv</sup> Agamben's reflections on the relationship between the 'human' and the 'animal' are particularly useful here, since they allow us to conceive the '*selva*' as the real and metaphorical space/place where the 'animal' was made to reside by modern political thought. This use of the concept helps to explain, we claim, why forests played such an important role in the production of the spaces of Nazi extermination. Drawing from this specific understanding of the *selva* we offer a geographical perspective on the links between the broader geopolitical project of realising a greater purified and *judenfrei* German *città* and the spatial thinking behind the attempts to find a 'territorial solution' to the Jewish question, then translated into the thanatopolitical spatialities of the Final Solution.

We begin by analysing Agamben's reflections on the modern production of the 'non-human in the human' and link them to his conceptualization of the *selva* as a fundamental space of the sovereign ban, but also as the place that the non-humans are supposed to inhabit and even embody. We then look at the



spatialization of the *selva* within the grand territorial planning of the Third Reich, and in particular at the production of a 'spatial rest' where the operation of separating, in the victims, the animal from the human took place. The third section concerns the perpetrators and their relationship with the *selva*: in particular, we reflect on the Nazis' need to momentarily *abandon* their imagined *città*, in order to penetrate the *selva* together with their victims and perpetrate their murderous plans. A crucial question emerges here: if the *selva* is where the animal resides and where the labour of separating the non-human in the human must take place, how could the Nazi New Man penetrate this realm of primitive violence and, at the same time, remain fully 'human' and a full citizen of the purified *Volks* in the name of which he committed murder? We will claim that this is where the attempted geographical separation of the *città* from the *selva* collapsed: not only did the perpetrators have to penetrate the uncertain threshold between the two in order to annihilate what remained of the 'man-beast', to use Agamben's characterization, and put at risk their own 'humanity', but these travels in the dark lands of extermination ended up reproducing the mutual penetration of *selva* and *città* and gave life to a vast space of exception where the separation between the two became literally impossible.

### **The animal-in-us**

In *The Open*, Giorgio Agamben, inspired by Kojève's reading of Hegel, while questioning the existence of an original threshold between man and animal (sic.) sets out what he describes as an 'anthropophorous' animality; in the modern historicization of the human he instead identifies the negation of this very animality, that is, the attempt to separate, in a stable and possible permanent way, man from animal:

man is not a biologically defined species, nor is he a substance given once and for all; he is, rather, a field of dialectical tensions always already cut by internal caesurae that every time separate—at least virtually—'anthropophorous' animality and the humanity which takes bodily form in it. Man exists historically only in this tension; he can be human only to the degree that he

transcends and transforms the anthropophorous animal which supports him, and only because, through the action of negation, he is capable of mastering and, eventually, destroying his own animality.<sup>xvi</sup>

This process of 'extraction of man' from the original anthropophorous animal translates into classifications and enumerations that represent attempts to speak the unspeakable, to capture what can never be captured by any language, never clearly defined.<sup>xvii</sup> Agamben thus suggests we focus our attention on the final product of this process, that is, its *resto* (rest), what remains of the modern biopolitical experiment of separating the human from the animal in order to create a sort of 'total man', the citizen of a new paradise on Earth: 'Perhaps the body of the anthropophorous animal ... is the unresolved remnant that idealism leaves as an inheritance to thought, and the aporias of the philosophy of our time coincides with the aporias of this body that is irreducibly drawn and divided between animality and humanity.'<sup>xviii</sup> 'The Jew', that is, 'the non-man produced within the man',<sup>xix</sup> is a genuine product of what Agamben refers to as the 'anthropological machine', a dispositive that establishes at its centre:

a zone of indifference ... within which – like a 'missing link' which is always lacking because it is already virtually present – the articulation between human and animal, man and non-man, speaking being and living being, must take place. Like every space of exception, this zone is, in truth, perfectly empty, and the truly human being who should occur there is only the place of a ceaselessly updated decision in which the caesurae and their rearticulation are always dislocated and displaced anew. What would thus be obtained, however, is neither an animal life nor a human life, but only a life that is separated and excluded from itself – only a bare life.<sup>xx</sup>

What is key to the argument of this paper is the fact that this endless process of dis-location and dis-placement is the result of the *spatialization* of the work of the anthropological machine. The actual experiment of separating the human from the animal takes place on the human body, which is the very 'territory' where the sovereign exception is translated into biopolitics.

The division of life into vegetal and relational, organic and animal, animal and human, therefore passes first of all as a mobile border within living man, and without this intimate caesura the very decision of what is human and what is not would probably not be possible. It is possible to oppose man to other living things, and at the same time to organize the complex – and not always edifying – economy of relations between men and animals, only because something like an animal life has been separated within man, only because his distance and proximity to the animal have been measured and recognized first of all in the closest and more intimate place.

But if this is true, if the caesura between the human and the animal passes first of all within man, then it is the very question of man ... that must be posed in a new way ... We must learn ... to think of man as what results from the incongruity of these two elements, and investigate not the metaphysical mystery of conjunction, but rather the practical and political mystery of separation.<sup>xxi</sup>

If 'the Jew' was the 'rest' of the separation produced by the Third Reich's anthropological machine, and the camp an 'extreme and monstrous attempt to decide between the human and the inhuman',<sup>xxii</sup> then Nazi biopolitics must always be linked to a process of 'localization', to a geography of real and imagined spaces *where* the virtual extraction of the animal from the body of the New Man and the parallel suppression of the human in the 'man-beast' actually took place.

**Nazi spatial politics and the geographies of the *selva***

In its extreme attempts to realize 'a good life', a new, happy and perfect man, together with a new harmonization of 'nature', the Third Reich tried to create a real topography of the separation between *selva* and *città* through the grand planning of an expansive German *Lebensraum*. This planning translated into an explicit geographical hierarchy of the occupied and/or annexed territories and produced a sort of 'spatial rest', a real and imagined borderless *selva* separated from the Nazi Eden,<sup>xxiii</sup> from the reconciled and domesticated nature inhabited by the Aryan New Man. This *selva* was supposed to host and make invisible the 'human rests' produced by Nazis' endless categorizations and classifications of the 'human', of all humans: the 'Jew' *in primis*, a Jew dehumanized by the categories produced by a fictional racial continuum endlessly excised, articulated and re-articulated by the biopolitical/anthropological machine.

Nazi spatial politics of extermination were thus the expression, on the one hand, of an extreme rationalization of the concept of the 'human' and of its cultural, biological and, therefore, political definitions; on the other, of the (feared) re-emergence of the 'animal', both in the body of 'the Jew' and in 'the German', who, terrified by what this re-emergence might mean – that is, the confirmation of the non-existence of a pure, civilized German – put an enormous effort into the progressive de-humanization and, eventually, destruction of the 'Jew-turned-into-animal'. The whole biopolitical machine at the core of the Nazi project seemed to be directed towards one main objective: the reduction of 'the Jew' (and of other lesser humans) to the status of the animal, their return to primitive Nature. This was paralleled by the attempted biopolitical redefinition of the German people implemented by the programs of euthanasia; a major and very concrete experiment in the perfecting of Nature and, while getting rid of the monsters that its imperfection produced, in realizing a German Eden on Earth.

However, what the spatial deployment of this biopolitical project made immediately clear was that any attempt to translate an ideal *città* into a purified *Lebensraum* could not live without the existence (somewhere) of a *selva*, of an 'imperfected' (state of) nature. The *selva*-turned-into-real-space of the Nazis was a sort of 'geographical garbage can', the other/outer space of a violent biopolitical geography. The *selva*-garbage-can was a 'spatial rest', what remained of the *scarto*<sup>xxiv</sup> (gap, residual) between the 'people' and the 'population', that is, the people translated into a biopolitical body. In the ultimate German *civitas*,

in the *Volk*, people and population had to coincide; the *selva*, instead, was where the 'rest' of this operation could be figuratively *and* materially located and *abandoned* or eliminated. Precisely for this reason, the *selva* could never disappear from the Nazi universe. The *selva* was indeed a crucial element of the operational strategy that aimed at realizing this hypothetical coincidence between the German people and population; it was the space-threshold in which the rest of this very operation ought to be dis-located, again, a real and metaphorical home for the biopolitical 'human rest' – where the intensive labour of its extraction and elimination should take place. The (re)production of the non-human, of Agamben's '*non-uomo*', required also a real location: again, the 'geographical-garbage-can' produced by the spatial purification that aimed at translating the territories of the Third Reich into a *judenfrei* Eden.

Nazi spatial planning and spatial demographics – with their calculations of an orderly and geometric *Lebensraum*, with their endless racial categorizations and the related massive displacement of people/populations – played a fundamental role in the production of a Nazi *selva* on a grand geopolitical scale, a novel geography to be traced by the military occupation of a progressively larger part of Eastern Europe. In the first phase of the war, the *Generalgouvernement* seemed to represent a sort of ideal territorial garbage can, the 'spatial rest' of the expansion of the Reich, an extended *selva* where the Jews formerly resident in Germany and in the annexed territories of Austria and Poland could be dumped. However, this role of the *Generalgouvernement* in the new geographies of the Reich was opposed by its governor Hans Frank, who wanted to convert it into a territory fully integrated within the new grand spatial order of the Nazi Empire. The new plans for the *Generalgouvernement*, submitted to Hitler in October 1940, helped to set the conditions for the identification, in the following months, of a new, even vaster, *selva*/garbage territory where the increasingly large 'human rest' produced by the Nazi geopolitical/biopolitical machine, i.e. the expelled Jewish population, could be deported.

Operation Barbarossa did not provide a 'territorial solution' to this problem. Although initially the idea was to deport the Jews to the 'Eastern lands' of the Asian continent and, literally, '*abandon*' them there, in practice the expansion of the Nazi Empire to the vast spaces of the Soviet Union soon translated into a sort of growth by metastasis of the German *Lebensraum*. The expansion of the spaces to be purified

and colonized made it necessary to link the conquered/occupied territories to the heart of the Reich through a colonial project founded on the creation of a new generation of Germans (or, lacking those, of 'Germanized') settlers/soldiers for a radical re-territorialization of the 'Eastern lands.'<sup>xxv</sup> According to Hitler and the Nazi elite, Europe was supposed to become a vast civilized and Germanized space dominated by a new master race. This very project opened the ground for new calculative spatial rationalities; as noted by Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, 'just one day before the German attack on the Soviet Union was launched, Himmler officially charged Meyer's planning department at the RKF with the task of drawing up a 'General Plan for the East'. This was intended as a blueprint for colonization and restructuring – not only for the whole of occupied Poland, but also for large expanses of the Soviet Union.'<sup>xxvi</sup> This project had a double effect: on the one hand, it was at the origin of a renewed effort in the attempt to fully 'racialize' the new domains, as expressed by the biopolitical delirium that brought the Nazis to categorize each individual of the subjected populations in order to identify potential German or Aryan characteristics that would allow them to provide the *Völkisch città* with fresh 'human material of a good quality'. On the other hand, in a Nazi Europe, putatively conceived as a comprehensive and definitive *città* in the making, there was to be no space left where to localise the *selva*; where to re-locate the 'human rest' produced by the process of extraction and refinement of the New Man. In the long run, however, the Jews, but also all the other 'leftovers' of the process of Germanization (among them, 'Gypsies', 'homosexuals', the disabled), were progressively to be deprived of any possible location/destination in the new Nazi world. Nobody wanted to host a growing mass of displaced Jews, no permanent *selva* seemed to be available anymore: neither in an expanded German Reich aiming at becoming a sort of total space, nor outside of it. There was literally no place to dump the 'human rest' of the production of the new *città*, no manageable *selva* in sight anymore. This was the turning point at which the so-called 'territorial solution' to the Jewish question began to be progressively translated into the dark horizon of an explicit politics of extermination.<sup>xxvii</sup> In geographical terms, this was the moment in which the spatial politics aimed at identifying a permanent localization of the *selva* external to the Reich – i.e. the *Generalgouvernement*, Madagascar, Palestine, Siberia, etc. – was progressively replaced by the *punctual localization of the selva* in the real and imagined 'forests' of Central and Eastern Europe *within* the newly formed Empire.

This radical rescaling of the concept of *selva* in Nazi geopolitics is confirmed by the language that was used to describe the passage from a territorial solution to mass extermination. The secret protocols of the Wannsee Conference, held on 20 January 1942, show how high-ranking Nazi officials agreed that 'emigration has now been replaced by evacuation of the Jews to the East ... The evacuated Jews will first be taken, group by group, to so-called transit ghettos, in order to be transported farther East from there.'<sup>xxviii</sup>

In the Nazis' euphemistic jargon, the expression 'farther East' denoted a space that cancelled once and forever all ambiguity regarding the reterritorialization of Eastern Europe and that materialized into the emergence of the gas chamber. During the long phase of overlap between the 'territorial' and the 'genocidal' solutions, a new space of semiotic indeterminacy was created within which the project of extermination—the 'surgical' removal of the Jewish presence in Europe—was expressed through the jargon of spatial planning. The massacres perpetuated during Operation Barbarossa were thus systematically described with the spatial language of the movement/relocation of populations (not only the Jews) and terms like *Umsiedlung* (resettlement), *Aussiedlung* (transportation)<sup>xxix</sup> or *Entfernung* (distance, but also 'expulsion' and 'removal'—as, for a surgeon, the removal of a tumour),<sup>xxx</sup> reflecting a significant degree of continuity between the language of the territorial solution and the one adopted to describe the different stages towards the Final Solution, between regional and urban planning and biopolitical violence. In this process of trans-lation, the *selva* was no longer a potential permanent location of the 'human rest' produced by the Nazi geopolitics, but, rather, a real and imagined space in which the violent tension implicit in the attempted realization of a purified German *Volk* could find full expression. The greater *città* envisaged by Himmler's 'General Plan for the East' and planned by Meyer and geographer Walter Christaller<sup>xxxi</sup> required endless new 'empty spaces' to fill with purified biopolitical substance – a new German *civitas* living in newly planned (mainly rural) *urbes*. The future spatial order of the Reich was to be the expression of a renewed (and utopian) equilibrium between the urban and the rural,<sup>xxxii</sup> opposed to the (spatial) degeneration produced by the uncontrolled expansion of modern cities and their suburbs, corrupted, as they were, by rootless cosmopolitan Jewry. In doing this, however, it also required a new *selva*-garbage-can where the remnants of this very spatial operation could be dumped. The real and

metaphorical threshold between *selva* and *città* thus became a crucial battlefield for German biopolitical geopolitics.

The long-standing problem of 'demographic density'<sup>xxxiii</sup> was then approached with an operative selection aimed at pushing the 'lesser-human' towards the *selva* and their supposedly original animal condition, in order to inscribe on their bodies the battle for the survival of the fittest race. The proper place of the 'Jew' became the *selva*, or better, its 'border', where they could be reduced to the 'rest' of this operation of 'total humanization'. The *selva* was therefore conceived as a space of exception where the human and the non-human were (re)produced, negotiated and (re)localized. The interplay between *selva* and *città* became nothing more than a dialectic that produced ever new non-humans, in the perspective of the ultimate realization of a total, absolute New Man, the offspring of a new, dominant master race. The politics of extermination identified in the *selva* – a sort of necessary black hole in the apocalyptic geographies of the Nazis – was the fundamental principle of de-localization that the extraction of the animal in the human required. The no-longer-humans ought to be brought somewhere in order to translate their death into a non-death, into the mere 'production of corpses'. The *selva*, in this geography of death, was therefore never really an-other space, never opposed to the Agambenian *città*: *selva* and *città* were, in fact, co-implicated in the production of the new *Volk*. The very existence of a real and imagined *selva* was what allowed the biopolitical machine to continue to function, precisely because the realization of a purified German *città* was an ideal geographical horizon, an imaginative space subject to endless purification. At the same time, the *selva*, by virtue of its spurious nature as a space devoid of humanity, could be identified for actions and functions related to this new total geography and constituted as an actual localization/site; that is, a crude spatialization of a monstrous state of exception.

It is not by chance, then, that extermination began in the forests of Eastern Poland, Belarus, Ukraine and the Baltic countries where the *Einsatzgruppen* accompanying the *Wehrmacht* performed the first vast systematic massacres of Jews and the local elites.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Also, it should not come as a surprise that the genealogy of the extermination camps was somehow linked to the forest. The Eastern European woods that witnessed mass murder and the Central European archipelago of camps appeared as the two



‘dislocating localization’<sup>xxxv</sup> of the *selva* – citing Agamben – right at the moment in which the initial aspiration of ‘dumping’ the human rests in the open spaces of the ‘Far East’ was rapidly replaced by the ambition of realising a racialized colonial empire in the heart of Europe. The proximity and, in a sense, the continuity between the woods and the camp, played a crucial role in the production of the geographies of the Final Solution. From December 1941, in fact, the use of gas for mass murder began progressively to overlap and often replace the practice of shooting on the part of the *Einsatzgruppen*. The *Gaswagen*, the infamous gas chambers on wheels, became mobile thresholds between the forest and the camp<sup>xxxvi</sup> and were soon transformed into key instruments in the operations of extermination implemented by the *Einsatzgruppen* and, eventually, in Chelmno, into the first extermination camp proper. The *Gaswagen* represented a true technical and symbolic passage in the shift from mass shooting to the industrial organization of murder; they were a *selva* determined by an uncertain topography, with no borders or location, which allowed for a new spatial mimetics of murder. The gaswagen was a true space-threshold onto which the victims were ‘loaded’ (alive) in the *urbes* and ‘unloaded’ (dead) in the periurban forests.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Many camps maintained a sort of intimate (and functional) relationship with the forest. First, the forests surrounding the camps were often a sort of *tote Zonen*, a no man’s land with the double function of hiding what was happening ‘inside’ and making any attempt to escape extremely difficult; secondly, the original localization of many extermination camps was closely related to the existence/presence of a forest:

two small wooden houses or peasants huts at the end of the footpath in the middle of a dense deciduous forest ... He (Wirth) first contemplated converting peasant huts into gas chambers by sealing them hermetically ... “a primitive installation, consisting of a hermetically sealed shack hidden deep in the forest across from Galicia near Belzec”<sup>xxxviii</sup> in which gassing was tested.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Also in Birkenau the first gas chambers were two converted peasants huts (Bunker 1 and 2, known as the white and the red cottages) in the forest located on the northern outskirts of Auschwitz’s main camp.<sup>xl</sup> In

addition, Birkenau literally meant 'birch groves' and owed its name to the forest next to the extermination camp.<sup>xli</sup>

Our claim is that the forest and the camp were closely related and that, in the geographies of genocide, the camp was a sort of punctual spatialization of the *selva*. Auschwitz-Birkenau was not only the pivot/fulcrum of the political topographies of German biopolitics, but it also represented, in our reading, the extreme spatial rationalization of the *selva*: the extermination camp was, in this sense, an extreme attempt to reproduce and, at the same, 'tame' the *selva* by rationalising mass murder in a spatial laboratory where the human was constantly re-conceived and separated from the animal. It was the site where the ultimate non-human was produced as a remnant, as a human rest of the greater process of the realization of a new German *Volk*, purified by the very labour of performing and managing a '*selva*' marked by violence and the incumbent ghost of the return of the animal-in-us.

### Travels in darkness

In the biopolitical operation of extraction of the animal from the human, the Nazis not only had to closely approach 'the Jew' to deprive them of their humanity, but also had to 'penetrate' the anthropophorous nature of their victims and, quite literally, walk (with) them into the darkness of the *selva*. This New Man, in order to build an imaginary *Völkisch civitas* devoid of any trace or presence of animality, had to transverse, through an endless series of 'cuts/caesurae', the body of lesser beings whose lives were classified and manipulated to extrapolate the non-human. The *selva*, again, was the 'natural' site for the final stage of this operation. However, once the *selva*, as part of the Final Solution, was translated into the extermination camp by the calculative rationalities of German geopolitics and biopolitics, approaching 'the Jew' and entering with them into the *selva* lost its extemporaneous connotation and *became a permanent condition and location* (the camp) where the Nazi 'integral human' was constantly exposed to the animal(ity) and the brutality of the *selva*. In violently performing the extraction of the-animal-in-the-Jew the perpetrators constantly risked revealing the animal-in-them and losing the very 'total humanity' in the name of which

they travelled to the darkness of the *selva* to commit murder. They were supposed to return, one day, to the safety of their purified *Volk*, finally rescued from the contamination of the *selva* that they created. The problem was that those who had travelled to the *selva* with the Jews were clearly exposed to the possibility of 'remaining' in the *selva* forever, by becoming the beasts that they seemed to fear so much. It is as though 'the-Jew-translated-into-animal' retained their perpetrators precisely in the same dimension in which both, albeit in dramatically different roles, found themselves once they penetrated together the primitive animal realm of the *selva*. This explains, perhaps, the concern often expressed by the higher ranks of the SS about the potential 'animal forces' that the experience of mass murder could liberate in their own men: the *selva* could literally swallow up the New Man, who might never be able to return to the qualified citizenship/membership of their *Völkisch civitas*.

One episode reported by Raul Hilberg bears witness to the attempts of the Nazi leadership to manage this dangerous threshold between the animal and the human in their own men, and its potential consequences in the accomplishment of the Final Solution:

Once Himmler himself visited Minsk. He asked Einsatzgruppen B Commander Nebe to shoot a batch of a hundred people, so that he could see what one of these 'liquidations' really looked like ... As the firing started, Himmler was even more nervous. During every volley he looked to the ground ... Himmler was visibly moved and decided to make a speech to all who were assembled there. He pointed out that the Einsatzgruppen were called upon to fulfil a repulsive (*widerliche*) duty. He would not like if Germans did such a thing gladly ... Himmler told the men to look at nature. There was combat everywhere, not only among men but also in the world of animals and plants ... Didn't bedbugs and rats have a life purpose also? Yes, but this has never meant that man could not defend against vermin. ... At the same Himmler asked Nebe "to turn over in his mind" various other killing methods more human than shooting. ... At the last, however, the RSHA technical unit (II-D)

went to work in order to devise a different killing method, and the result of that experimentation was the gas van.<sup>xlii</sup>

It was as if, forced to delocalise the 'rest' of this process of production of non-humans, the perpetrators themselves desperately tried to avoid being entirely (and irreversibly) absorbed by the tenebrous embrace of the *selva*, in order to retain some fundamental link to the dream of the *Völkisch civitas* whose new foundation was the very reason why they penetrated so deeply into the dark labyrinths of the *selva*. The grotesque decorations of the gas van or of the gas chambers – together with the endless production of imaginative technocratic and bureaucratic jargon – certainly had the aim of deceiving the victims, but also possibly the more subtle objective of exorcising the terror/horror of the beast that was liberated by those very actions. The perpetrators had to be reassured that they were still human; they had to be reminded that, at the end, the horror of the *selva* would be left behind to return 'home'; that these travels into the deep darkness of the non-human were necessary precisely to annihilate the *selva* that was among them and that threatened the ultimate realization of the German Eden on Earth.

This perception of the *selva* as a dangerous place for the German New Man, as a place of darkness where he could be retained forever, also played a central role in the structuring of the functions of the extermination camp. This explains, at least in part, the attempts to get the members of the SS away as far as possible from the direct management of the everyday practices of degradation and extermination of the victims, by delegating most of the tasks and the rituals related to the de-humanization and de-subjection of the inmates to other inmates, as was the case with the *Sonderkommando* in charge of the cleaning up of the gas chambers and the elimination of the corpses.<sup>xliii</sup> However, despite these attempts to keep the *selva* separate from the *città* – both through a specific spatial ordering of the camp and the 'moral' code that sanctioned the SS for any form of sadistic behaviour or familiarity with the victims – the fear of the re-emergence of the 'animal' in humans that were supposed to be racially purified was never entirely eliminated by the industrial management of the Final Solution. This zone of indistinction that the

perpetrators created and in which they found themselves, reflects the suicidal nature of the most ambitious biopolitical operation ever conceived: the attempted creation of a New Man who, to be 'fully human' (that is, German), ought to (temporarily) return to his animal condition and enter into that very same *selva* that he feared so much.

One key episode of strategic 'return' of the forest-as-*selva* into the Nazi universe is worth mentioning. The Belarussian woods are where, since the end of 1941, Soviet and Polish partisans, together with many Jews, escaped from persecution and found refuge, and where they began to organise an active resistance against the occupation. The Nazi elite felt that, in order to take care of this unfinished job, they had to 'return' to the forest: the biopolitical selection/cut operated on the body of the occupied populations had in fact produced these untamed 'human rests', banned werewolves whose existence could potentially threaten the edification of a brave Nazi world. A key question was who should re-enter the *selva* in order to finally 'de-forest' the new German lands. Tellingly, in February 1942, Himmler assigned this task also to the infamous *Sonderkommando Dirlewanger*,<sup>xliv</sup> named after its leader, and created in 1940 by Himmler himself. While this decision was part of a broader (and numerically much more significant) strategy to combat the partisans, the symbolic relevance of the *Sonderkommando Dirlewanger* in the attempted realisation of a purified German *città* in the occupied Eastern territories is not to be underestimated. The overall idea was to give life to a special elite corps composed of poachers (and criminals) capable of operating in extreme and adverse conditions. The practice of enrolling hunters and poachers in special corps was not new to European military history; however, the deployment of this *Sonderkommando* went beyond the need for local 'territorial' expertise, as was the case in past instances. By sending this group of 'forest men' to fight the partisans in the woods, the high ranks of the SS tried to radically face the problem of the persistence of the *selva* in their universe; that is, of how to exercise the 'bestial' violence required without indefinitely losing their 'humanity'.

The emphasis placed by both Hitler and Göring, on several occasions, on the passion that animates the hunter reveals how what was really at stake there, again, was the threshold between the human and the animal in the construction of the new Nazi Man.<sup>xlv</sup> According to Ingrao, in the European *imaginaire*

*cynégétique*, an excess of *sang noir* is what drives the hunter in seeking, in the violent experience of hunting, a sort of link between the human and the animal. However, if the hunter's violence and passion moved beyond the limits of what was normally accepted by civil society, then he became a poacher, a man of the *selva*, a sort of werewolf, somehow closer to his prey than to the *civitas* whose rules he transgressed. Here is a crucial point: extreme violence—that for the *Einsatzgruppen* ought to be practiced with detachment, as a sort of duty in the name of their civilized community<sup>xlvi</sup>—for the *Sonderkommando Dirlewanger* was an expression of their passion and of the animality that they embodied.

From the Nazi standpoint, evoking the *cynégétique* passion and cruelty was meant to bring back the *Sauvage* into the city at war ... What was allowed in the forest-like margins, liminal and disputed, of the millenary empire to be erected, it was not in the Nazi city ... The former [the *cynégétique* violence] would freely take place in sectors/**spaces** whose marginality was threefold. They were marginal in that topographically localised in the extreme East of the empire; they were also marginal as they were the settings of a war escaping the norms of the classical confrontation (**affrontement**). They were marginal, finally, because they acted in undomesticated spaces, where the German 'mission civilisatrice' had not accomplish its tasks yet.<sup>xlvii</sup>

As part of the attempted domestication of the 'animality' exposed by the unruly actions of this cohort of werewolves, the brigade was progressively integrated with members coming from other marginal social groups: criminals, 'a-socials', SS and Wehrmacht members expelled for disciplinary reasons, Russian deserters, and even political prisoners 're-educated' in concentration camps.<sup>xlviii</sup> This *Sonderkommando* became a unique consortium of 'remnants' of the Nazi project, a strange regiment of marginalized people. The strategic 'inclusion of the excluded' somehow represented a sort of 'return of the animal' among the 'humans' of the *Sonder-Kommando*, which liberated an escalation of extreme violence towards partisans and common citizens, but also within the brigade itself, with a sharp increase in episodes of coercion,

desertion, and even execution from the summer of 1943 onwards.<sup>xlix</sup> In this process of 'retained animality', the *Sonderkommando* was progressively banned from the spaces of the Germanized *città* and confined to the *selva*, as shown by the documented clashes between Oskar Dirlewanger and the civil authorities, and by the attempts to expel the brigade from Lublin and the *Generalgouvernement*.<sup>i</sup> Nonetheless, in August 1944, the *Sonderkommando Dirlewanger* entered Warsaw with the task of repressing the insurrection organized by the Polish resistance.<sup>ii</sup> This 'return to the *urbs*', however, did not imply that the poachers and their unruly comrades were admitted to the *civitas* again; rather, it was the sign that, in Warsaw, *selva* and *città* were collapsing into a space-threshold of indistinction. The 'mission' and the *modus operandi* of this special corps transformed 'Varsovie insurgée en forêt urbaine, en terrain de chasse pour la Sonderbrigade.'<sup>lii</sup> Not only the un-localizable location of the *selva* forced the Nazi New Man to return to the forest, but, in the last phases of the war, the *selva* (in the form of this unruly brigade) had, quite literally, to re-enter and penetrate the purified space of the *città*.

### ***Selva in città/città in selva: the collapse of Nazi topographic imaginations***

In the previous sections, we reflected on the tension between the perfect world envisaged by Himmler and his peers – a *città* devoid of the *selva*, a geometric Eden filled with urbanized/civilized German humanity – and the fact that its realization required the permanence of the *selva*, of a (real and metaphorical) 'outer space', a sort of counter-world compared to the geographies of permanent peace imagined by Nazi ideologues. This tension materialized on the border between these two worlds, and it is here that the future destiny of a Germanized Europe was negotiated. The Nazi territorialized Eden was supposed to be a garden carved out by harmonic geometries, inhabited by content and blond Aryans, where a de-forested *città* was finally at peace with a tamed nature. In this millennial picture, the *selva* was first imagined to persist somewhere far away, but when, with the evolution of the war, the spatial metaphor of the 'Farther East' materialized in the extermination camp, the *selva* became, literally, a no-man's-land: only the *città* should have survived, inhabited by humans devoid of animality.

As Agamben would contend, any attempt permanently to isolate the animal from human life is doomed to failure. The greater Nazi geopolitical and biopolitical project was theoretically flawed from its outset: in the attempt to realize a Europe dominated by a German master race, the Jews became the 'human rest' of a biopolitical 'de-forestation' that could never be completed. The events around the *Sonderkommando Dirlwanger* bear witness, among many others, that the *selva*, the animal-in-us, fully survived the bio-geopolitical cuts operated by the Nazis in the European body politic. The 'primitive' animality attributed to 'lesser people' by Nazi demographic categories was, in fact, alimented by the bestial violence inherent in the very operations that were at the base of these endless caesurae of the population's body. The 'rest' of these operations never left the real and imagined Nazi *città*; it was a constitutive element of its fabric, its hidden sewage system, its deep root ready to re-emerge in the personae of the perpetrators and in the spaces of extermination.

The ultimate failure of the Nazi project was already present *in nuce* in the practice of deporting foreign workers (mainly Poles and Russians, but also French, Italian and other Western nationals) to the very heart of the Reich.<sup>liii</sup> The final result of this apocalyptic biopolitics was that *selva* and *città* ended up cohabiting in the very heart of the 'Aryanized' geographies of the Third Reich. This is confirmed by the fact that the copenetration between *selva* and *città* was deeper and more permanent in the regions that, since the beginning, played a fundamental role in the geographical imaginations of the Nazi *Lebensraum*, that is, in Poland's Western territories annexed to the Reich. The cities of Oswiecim and Lodz, in particular, became at once pivots of Nazi regional and urban planning *and* key sites (in the camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Lodz's infamous ghetto) for the production of biopolitical 'human rests'. They were thus assigned German names—Auschwitz and Litzmannstadt—and became literally 'central locations' (in a Christallerian sense) in the spatial re-organization of that greater region. Their progressive 'Germanization' aimed at realizing a new kind of German *città* in two locations that, while traditionally inhabited also by Germans, were identified above all as important clusters of Jewish presence.<sup>liv</sup>

Auschwitz/Oswiecim and Litzmannstadt/Lodz thus became the localization of both *selva* and *città* in the heart of the Nazi Eden shaped by the Final Solution. What is more important, this dual localization



was neither temporary nor topographically separated, as it is often believed. The coexistence of ‘German’ civilized space and primitive (human) nature (the Jews, the camp, the ghetto) lasted up to the very end of the war, giving life to a sort of gigantic permanent state—and space—of exception. Indeed, the camp and the ghetto were never radically separated from the *urbs*—despite the presence of endless gates, fences and barbed wires in the Nazi concentrational universe.<sup>lv</sup> Quite the contrary: they were kept distinct and, at the same time, integrated by a mobile spatial threshold where *selva* and *città* often overlapped and became indistinguishable. The construction of the *selva*-translated-into-an-extermination-camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau, for example, merged with the project for the realization of a greater *urbs*,<sup>lvi</sup> and produced a sort of hybrid space marked by uncertain borders and mobile geographies—this was the secret cipher of the relationship between *selva* and *città* as conceived by the Nazi geographical imagination. It was a relationship marked, at once, by fear and fascination. Otherwise, how can we explain the ‘exotic’ tours of the ghettos organized by Germans eager to gaze at the ‘monkey men’, the monsters produced by the biopolitical purification associated with Nazi spatial and demographic planning? The ghetto and its ‘banned’ inhabitants were, in other words, rendered an exotic and fearful mirror of the human condition that the new *civitas* wanted to exorcise, expel and isolate—the terrifying *selva*-in-us.

If we accept, with Agamben, that the ban is an intimate and violent *exclusive inclusion*<sup>lvii</sup> and that the sovereign decision is based on the mobile caesura that determines the threshold between *selva* and *città*, then their mutual co-penetration in the spaces here discussed shows how the spatial theory behind the project of a greater and purified German *Lebensraum* was flawed and untenable. The attempted selective animalization of the victims, in fact, ended up producing new forms of violent animality on the part of the perpetrators. This may also help explain the many episodes of irrational anger towards the victims, even in the last months of the war: it was as if the perpetrators knew that there was no possible return to a purified *città*, since the brutal violence of the *selva* that they feared so much had irreversibly penetrated their bodies and minds.

During the infamous Death Marches, in the final moments of the Reich, this fear took perhaps its most dramatic expression: wolves turned into cruel shepherds leading masses of ‘non-humans’ in a

meaningless march through a devastated land of violence and disorder, through the decomposing Nazi Eden, an immense *selva* with no rule and no *città*. Tellingly, the guards, despite the lack of clear instructions, kept on torturing and murdering the marching inmates during this endless, pointless performance of sovereign power.<sup>lviii</sup> It is difficult to think of a more illustrative scene of the vanishing dream of a perfected German *civitas* devastated by the violent re-emergence of the bestiality of primitive nature in the German body politic. During the march, many guards acted as real beasts: the only thing keeping them together was the possibility of killing and operating with cruelty—the animal that re-emerged in them after having explored the darkest spaces of the *selva* did not *abandon* them. After having experienced the end-of-man (of the human), they were travelling through a final indistinct land with no meaning and no direction, only pure violence. The safe shores of the *città* were no more.

What the ideologues of the Nazi Eden overlooked was that their envisaged radical separation between *selva* and *città* was pure (and poor) academic fiction. There is no Paradise on Earth: the human-in-us and animal-in-us are always co-implicated, with no ‘rest’. That explains why the ‘human rest’ produced by their lethal biopolitical machine was what they feared the most: that ‘rest’ was their own mirror, the embarrassing residual of an impossible project, the witness of the animal-in-them, and the end of the millennial horizon for a self-appointed master race. This also explains many expressions of self destruction: for the true believers, the German people could either be one thing with the *Völkisch città*—or would not be. The predatory actions of gangs of Nazis and criminals—in some cases self-described as *werewolves*<sup>lix</sup>—in the final phases of the war are possibly the most vivid example of the final sanction of the dark side of nature mobilized by Nazi biopolitics. In the arcane and tenebrous landscapes of an idealized *città* that was not to be, these gangs operated a sort of ‘self-banning’ and a return to an ‘animal’ condition through parasitical forms of survival, typical of an apocalyptic view of life and society. It is precisely here that the entanglement of the *selva* and the *città* appears to be, at the same time, the driving force of the genocidal project and its ultimate point of breakdown, something that can perhaps be found also at the core of other genocidal practices. The primitive nature re-awakened by the Nazis’ de-humanization of others seemed to have definitely colonized their own bodies and minds, shocked by the vanishing image of a *città* lost

forever. All that remained was the cruel (animal?) immediacy of the *selva* and its precarious political economy of theft and rape: 'The transformation into a werewolf corresponds perfectly to the state of exception, during which ... time the *città* is dissolved and men enter into a zone in which they are no longer distinct from beasts.'<sup>ix</sup>

---

<sup>i</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transit* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 11

<sup>ii</sup> LaCapra, *History*, p. 111.

<sup>iii</sup> Samuel Moyn, 'In the Aftermath of Camps', in Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller (eds.), *Histories of the Aftermath* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), pp. 49-64.

<sup>iv</sup> Mark Mazower, 'Foucault, Agamben: Theory and the Nazi', *Boundary 2*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2008, p. 27

<sup>v</sup> Mazower, 'Foucault', p. 27

<sup>vi</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), orig. *Homo Sacer* (Turin: Einaudi, 1995).

<sup>vii</sup> Claudio Minca, 'Agamben's geographies of modernity', *Political Geography*, Vol. 26, 2007, pp. 78-97.

<sup>viii</sup> See, among others: Andrew Charlesworth, 'The Topography of Genocide', in Dan Stone (ed.), *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 216-251; David B. Clarke, Marcus A. Doel and Francis X. McDonough, 'Holocaust Topologies: Singularity, Politics and Space', *Political Geography*, Vol.15, No. 6/7, 1996, pp. 457-489; Tim Cole, *Holocaust City: The Making of a Jewish Ghetto*, (London: Routledge, 2003); Stuart Elden, 'National Socialism and the Politics of Calculation', *Social and Cultural Geography*, Vol. 7, No. 5, 2006, pp. 753-769.

<sup>ix</sup> Agamben, *Homo* (orig.), pp. 116-123.

---

<sup>x</sup> Cited in Richard King, 'Creative Landscaping', *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 85, No. 3, 1990, p. 227.

<sup>xi</sup> Sandro Chignola, 'Civis, Civitas, Civilitas', *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2007, p. 238.

<sup>xii</sup> Agamben, *Homo*, p. 105.

<sup>xiii</sup> Agamben, *Homo*, p. 105.

<sup>xiv</sup> Agamben, *Homo*, p. 106.

<sup>xv</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Harvard: Belknap, 2008), p. 150.

<sup>xvi</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Open* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 12.

<sup>xvii</sup> Agamben, *Open*, p. 13.

<sup>xviii</sup> Agamben, *Open*, p. 12.

<sup>xix</sup> Agamben, *Open*, p. 37.

<sup>xx</sup> Agamben, *Open*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>xxi</sup> Agamben, *Open*, pp. 15-16, italics added.

<sup>xxii</sup> Agamben, *Open*, p. 22.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), p. 186.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Mezzi senza fine* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1996), p. 25.

<sup>xxv</sup> Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), pp. 530-532.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Architects of Annihilation* (London: Phoenix, 2002), p. 255. On the controversial relationship between the 'General Plan for the East' and Operation Barbarossa see also Alex J. Kay, *Exploitation, Resettlement, Mass Murder* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), in particular, pp. 100-102; for an alternative interpretation, see Peter Witte et al., eds., *Der Terminkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941/42* (Hamburg: Christians, 1999), p.179, note 43.

---

<sup>xxvii</sup> Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution* (Lincoln: University of Nevada Press, 2004). For a more nuanced approach to the relation between the ‘territorial’ and ‘final’ solutions see: Peter Longerich, *Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>xxviii</sup> Yitzhak Arad, Israel Gutman and Abraham Margalit, *Documents on the Holocaust* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), p. 253, 256..

<sup>xxix</sup> Eugen Kogon, *Les chambres à gaz secret d’État* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 2000), pp. 20-23.

<sup>xxx</sup> The same ambiguity is found in *Ausrotten*, that translates as “to destroy”, but also “to stamp out”, “to eradicate”. See Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman, *Denying History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009) pp. 205-208.

<sup>xxxi</sup> See, among others, Mechtild Rössler, ‘Applied geography and area research in Nazi society’, *Environment and Planning D*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 1989, pp. 419-431.

<sup>xxxii</sup> See, among others, Tilman A. Schenk, ‘Mass-Producing Traditional Small Cities’, *Journal of Planning History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2003, pp. 107-139.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Aly, *Architects*, pp. 58-72.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Richard Rhodes, *Masters of Death* (New York: Knopf, 2002).

<sup>xxxv</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 175.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Kogon, *Chambres*, pp. 72-97.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Kogon, *Chambres*, p. 115.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Bodgan Musial, *Deutsche Zivilverwaltung und Judenverfolgung im Generalgouvernement* (publisher unknown), pp.

205-6 cited in Christopher Browning, *Collected Memories* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 28.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Browning, *Collected Memories*, p. 28.

<sup>xl</sup> Robert J. Van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz. Evidence from the Irving Trial* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 267, 288.

- 
- <sup>xli</sup> Andrew Charlesworth and Mike Addis, ‘Memorialization and the Ecological Landscapes of Holocaust Sites’, *Landscape Research*, 27, 3, 2002, p. 244.
- <sup>xlii</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The destruction of European Jewry* (Teaneck: Holmes and Meier, 1961), pp. 218-219.
- <sup>xliii</sup> See, among others, Shlomo Venezia, *Inside the Gas Chambers* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).
- <sup>xliv</sup> On the *Sonderkommando Dirlwanger* see: French L. MacLean, *The Cruel Hunters: SS-Sonderkommando Dirlwanger Hitler’s Most Notorious Anti-Partisan Unit* (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing, 1998) and Christian Ingrao, *Les chasseurs noir: La brigade Dirlwanger* (Paris: Éditions Perrin, 2006).
- <sup>xlv</sup> Ingrao, *Chasseurs*, pp. 116-117.
- <sup>xlvi</sup> Dan Stone, “Modernity and violence: Theoretical reflections on the Einsatzgruppen”, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 1, 3, 1999, pp. 367-378.
- <sup>xlvii</sup> Ingrao, *Chasseurs*, pp. 123-124.
- <sup>xlviii</sup> Ingrao, *Chasseurs*, pp. 21-61.
- <sup>xlix</sup> Ingrao, *Chasseurs*, pp. 101-113.
- <sup>l</sup> MacLean, *Hunters*, pp. 60-63.
- <sup>li</sup> MacLean, *Hunters*, pp. 175-198.
- <sup>lii</sup> Ingrao, *Chasseurs*, p. 178.
- <sup>liii</sup> See: Ulrich Herbert, *Hitler’s Foreign Workers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- <sup>liv</sup> See, among others, Gordon J. Horwitz, *Ghettostadt: Łódź and the Making of a Nazi City* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008) and Sybille Steinbacher, *Auschwitz: A History* (New York: Ecco, 2005).
- <sup>lv</sup> Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 55-64.

---

<sup>lvi</sup> Deborah Dwork and Robert J. van Pelt, *Auschwitz, 1270 to the Present* (New York: Norton, 1996), pp. 236-275.

<sup>lvii</sup> Agamben, *Homo*, p. 107.

<sup>lviii</sup> Daniel Blatman, *Le marce della morte* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2009), p. 239.

<sup>lix</sup> Perry Biddiscombe, *The Last Nazis* (Stroud: Tempus, 2000), p. 20.

<sup>lx</sup> Agamben, *Homo*, p. 107.